

## **Summary of the Conference Management Committee Meeting February 5, 1997**

The National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) Conference Management Committee met from 9 to 10:15 a.m. Eastern Standard Time on Wednesday, February 5, 1997. The meeting was led by Committee chair Marion Thompson, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), Office of Water (OW). A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of Committee members in attendance is given in Attachment B.

### **INTRODUCTION**

*The purpose of the meeting was to recap the July 1996 Committee meeting, to discuss issues in relation to the upcoming Third NELAC Annual Meeting, and to comment on sites in Texas for the Fourth NELAC Annual Meeting in 1998.*

### **RECAP OF JULY 1996 MEETING**

Several issues from the previous meeting were discussed:

- It was decided that, as the meeting sites will follow the NELAC chairperson, the 1997 and 1998 annual meetings will be held in Texas.
  - It was proposed that a registration fee of \$100 be charged for the Dallas, TX, meeting. This is the first time that a registration fee will be charged at a NELAC meeting.
  - A teleconference was held to discuss the issue of nonprofit organizations sponsoring the annual meeting. Six organizations were suggested. It was decided that two proposals would be accepted: one from the Water Environmental Foundation and one from the Association of State and Territory Public Health Laboratories Directorate (ASTPHLD). Proposals will be submitted by April 15.
- ! Four issues were identified relating to meeting costs and sponsorship:
- 1) Will there be exhibits to defray the costs of meeting?
  - 2) Will there be sponsors for individual food and coffee services?
  - 3) Will the registration fee be waived for NELAC voting members?
  - 4) What will be the overall cost of the conference?

It was noted that the State of Texas will support the meeting and the costs may be understated.

### **ANNUAL MEETING IN DALLAS IN JULY 1997**

The meeting in Dallas is scheduled for July 28-31, 1997. The Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Board (ELAB) meeting will be held July 28, and the voting portion will be held July

29-31. Still to be determined is the method of voting; should it be changed from a show of hands to electronic voting? A keypad voting system would cost about \$15,000 including purchasing supplies, renting equipment, and training. A "scantron" system (fill-in circles on computer-read cards) is also being considered, but the results of that system would not be immediately known. There needs to be consideration of costs between hand and electronic voting, as well as fulfilling requirements of the constitution and charter. Other suggestions were a bar code system, third-party sponsorship of voting, and getting price quotes from other vendors.

## **COSTS**

Sponsorship of meeting components was discussed. It was noted that the USEPA is considering ethics advisory guidance regarding sponsorship. Sponsorship must not appear to bias the outcomes of a meeting. In response to a question about prior funding arrangements, it was noted that funding has come from USEPA, but furloughs of 1996 initiated a desire to secure other sources. One person suggested contacting the Department of Energy (DOE), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), or other agencies about co-sponsorship.

Inviting exhibitors as a means of defraying costs was discussed. Exhibits may entice greater attendance. A question was raised about the ratio of exhibitors to attendees. With only 250-300 attendees, would exhibitors want to come? Also, should there be vendors at a working meeting? A decision on exhibits will be made in 1-2 months. It was noted that the decision on exhibits could delay decisions on proposed sponsorship.

A registration fee will be charged at the Third NELAC Annual Meeting for the first time. Committee members said they don't know how the fee may affect attendance. While the fee could decrease attendance, it was noted that more predictable room reservations, meal functions, and dates will help lower costs.

## **WAIVER OF REGISTRATION FEES**

The NELAC Board of Directors is not in favor of waiving registration fees as other conferences do. The idea of a sliding scale for NELAC members was mentioned. Participants then commented on the need for advanced "official" notice of meeting cities and dates to consider when budgeting and requesting funding from their individual organizations. A Federal Register announcement of the meeting was mentioned. Interim meetings will follow annual meetings by six months. The Committee will try to continue holding annual meetings each July, with meeting sites located in the home State of the NELAC chairperson. The goal is to try to plan meetings two years in advance.

## **SITE SELECTION FOR 1998**

The Fourth NELAC Annual Meeting will be held in Texas: Houston, Dallas, Austin, or San Antonio are all possibilities. People like San Antonio, but its hotels fill quickly. The Committee should consider outlying sites rather than the Riverwalk area. Travelers to San Antonio or Austin need to arrange connecting flights in Houston or Dallas. Houston's temperature in the summer averages 100 °F, with 100% humidity.

A question was raised about why interim meetings are only held in Washington, D.C. Doing so holds down travel costs for Federal participants located in that area and helps ensure the quality of meeting services. Suggestions for interim meeting sites included Las Vegas, NV, and the USEPA Region cities.

**ACTION ITEMS**  
**Conference Management Committee**  
**February 5, 1997**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
1	Make recommendations to the Board on funding, exhibits, and other issues.	
2	Schedule a teleconference with the Board to talk about sponsorship prohibitions and concerns.	
3	Decide site for 1998 Annual Meeting.	

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**  
**Conference Management Committee Meeting**  
**February 5, 1997**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Phone/Fax/E-mail</b>
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